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**Saudi-US trade grows 14%**

*Arab News*

By Galal Fakkar

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JEDDAH: The Embassy of the United States in the Kingdom has plans to facilitate visits by several Saudi delegations to the US over the next two months so that they may have a close view of how small and medium enterprises in the US function. The announcement was made by US charge d'affaires, Richard Erdman, in a meeting with the officials of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) yesterday. Erdman is accompanying a US delegation currently visiting Jeddah. "The embassy is working on entry visas got the Saudi businessmen and businesswomen in addition to expanding the training program for Saudi students in the US," Erdman said.

The signing of various trade agreements between the two countries resulted in a 14 percent growth in bilateral trade between the two countries last year compared to the year before that, the US official said. He also stressed the need for strengthening trade relations between the businesswomen in the two countries by removing all obstacles in the way.

The American delegation also visited the Khadijah bint Khuwailid Center, a subsidiary of the JCCI that specializes in promoting business activities of Saudi businesswomen.

Mazin Battarjee, deputy chairman of the JCCI, who attended the meeting with the US delegation, said he discussed various issues with the US delegation, including mutual trade visits between the two countries and joint investment opportunities. He also discussed opportunities for joint exhibitions and projects in both countries in addition to obstacles faced by investors in the Kingdom and the US. Their discussions also emphasized the need for greater facilities to increase the volume of investment with total transparency of investment information in the area of services, agriculture and the commodity exchange, he said.

He also noted that the mutual trade between the two countries grew to SR200 billion last year.

Battarjee also stressed the role played by the Khadijah bint Khuwailid Center in helping Saudi businesswomen and finding employment for unemployed women. "The Khadijah center's other activities include holding seminars, meetings, exhibitions besides receiving international delegations concerned with the development of women," he added. He said there were 3,000 business establishments run by women in Jeddah.

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